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**Chapter Ten**  
**A Narrative on the Use of Interviews to Shape an Ethnographic Research into**  
**Family Language Practices**  
**Indu Meddegama**

**Guiding questions:**

1. Indu uses the words *rapport* and *confidence* to describe the development of her research relationships with her participants. Can you identify the processes she uses that encourage these qualities?
2. Why do you think Indu calls her chapter a 'narrative'? In what ways can her research be considered as taking a narrative approach to her questions?

**Introduction**

Starting from birth, throughout the entirety of our lives, one thing that allows us to understand better the everyday phenomena that we encounter, is enquiry. And so from the moment we are able to communicate – verbally, gesturally or through technological aids – we interact with others asking and answering questions of *Why* and *How* amongst a plethora of others. It is this process of enquiry or *interviewing*, as it is known in formal interactions, that became a key data collection instrument in my ethnographic research on three immigrant multilingual Malayali families living in the North of England.

The primary focus for my research came about from initial observations that I had come to make as an acquaintance of this Malayali community. The discrepancies that seemed to prevail across these two-generational families in relation to their proficiency in and preferences towards the use of Malayalam and English soon caught my attention. During casual conversations with them, I had begun to make a mental note of how the English-dominant children seemed to accommodate and at times disregard their parents' observed preference for using the Malayalam language. Encouraged by postulations that the authority of first-generation immigrants can be challenged by second-generation children as a result of such differences in English language proficiency (Canagarajah 2008, Hua 2008), my focus, as evinced through the research question below, fell on the manner in which the Malayali families' associated status and power structure was portrayed through their intergenerational language practices:

Research question: What are the linguistic resources that participants use in order to challenge and/or retain status and power relations?

The crux of this question lay in the language practices and the ways in which they reflected and enacted concepts of status and power. Drawing on my own cultural upbringing in a South Asian context, I presumed that the Malayali families would be based on the Indian patriarchal system within which authority and status are assigned on the basis of gender and generation (Kaul 2012). Accordingly, within a nuclear family unit in which a married heterosexual couple are of the same generation, the father would become the head of the household owing to his gender. And so, to investigate possible links between the families' everyday language practices and status and power relations pertaining to the heritage culture, data were collected from interviews, audio-recorded family conversations and observational field notes.

To address the research question and to make sense of the interconnectedness between the social constructs of status and power and language practices, I adopted a methodological framework within which the intra-family conversations were examined to identify episodes of child-parent, child-child and/or spouse-spouse disagreements. This process was guided by the assumption that such interactional segments may index how authority is exercised and received by the members of the participant families. Drawing on Hymes's (1972) ethnographic framework, the *interlocutors* of these segments and the *language practices* they adopt were then studied further, on the presupposition that interlocutors may use language strategically to maintain or challenge status and power relations. The resulting emergent themes on conformity towards and divergence from the patriarchal system were subsequently scrutinised against reported data obtained from a series of interviews with the participants.

Retrospectively speaking, the design and execution of the interviews within the research made them characteristically ethnographic in nature. In the broadest sense of the word, ethnography entails presenting a detailed account of a group of people (Agar 1996; Wolcott 1999). And this in fact, was just what my interviews enabled me to do: to offer in-depth insights and *thick descriptions* of the Malayalis' home language use. The concept of *thick descriptions* first introduced to ethnography by Geertz (1973) and later expanded by Denzin (1989: 83) involves presenting 'detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another'. Denzin therefore recognized that human behaviour required the examination of contextual factors as well as the *reported* thoughts and feelings of the individuals concerned.

The primary objective of this chapter is to narrate the manner in which interviewing helped align the emic or participant perspectives with the inevitable etic, or in this instance my own, interpretations (Agar 1996; Spradley 1980) reflected in the family conversations and the observational field notes. Although my participants and I could broadly be defined as South Asian, as the researcher, almost by definition, I arrived as an *outsider* or 'a foreign body' (Blommaert and Jie 2010: p.26) within the research context. This in turn, reinforces the need to refrain from allowing my prior understandings of socio-cultural phenomena to impact on the data interpretation unnecessarily. Consequently, what I attempt to show in the chapter is the way in which interviewing helped strengthen the data analysis process and the credibility of the findings and ultimately to conclude the research

with a sense of jubilation. However, its early stages, involving the recruitment of participants and interviewing for the first time, were riddled with the inevitable: pitfalls. This is where I would like to start this narrative.

### **Context and recruitment of participants.**

To refer to the beginnings of my research, I must necessarily refer to its context: the city of York in northern England, home to a substantial Malayali community. Amongst the Indians who feature at the top of non-UK born residents in England and Wales (Office of National Statistics 2016) are the Malayalis from the South Western region of Kerala in India. The term *Malayali* traditionally referred to Keralites who spoke Malayalam as their first language. However in recent years the term has been used more broadly to refer to emigrants of Malayali descent who maintain certain elements of Malayali cultural traditions (Asia Harvest 2013). Sustaining such a Malayali community who statistically form 5.5% of the city's overall population (ONS 2016) is York. As a resident of the city, I was acquainted with this community and approached two families who expressed their willingness to participate in my research straightaway. Two months later, both families migrated to Australia, apologetically explaining to me that superstitious belief had prevented them from giving me advanced notice of their departure. Through sheer determination, I approached and secured the interest and consent of three other families, mere acquaintances at the time, but close friends today.

Each of the three families, referred to henceforth as A, B and C to retain their anonymity, consisted of heterosexual partners born and brought up in India and two children, some born overseas and others in the UK. The names of the family members were also replaced with pseudonyms in the interview and interactional data transcripts and in light of this fact the participants will be referred to by their fictitious names in this chapter. The parents who were first-generation immigrants to the UK were either in the health care profession, the catering business or self-employed taxi drivers. The children fell into the age group of four to twelve years and were all attending mainstream schools locally. Amongst the many socio-cultural aspects that allowed me to draw parallels between the participants, were the linguistic resources of Malayalam and English which they had at their disposal and used to varying degrees of competence alongside other Indian languages.

The interviews themselves were scheduled at the participants' homes. As my overarching research aim was to study language practices within the home, interviewing offered me an excellent opportunity to observe the participants' verbal behaviour in the domain that I was interested in. What is more, using digital recorders provided by me, family conversations had also been recorded by the participant parents themselves in their homes. Across all three families, the mothers played a vital role in collecting the interactional data and in attending all the interviews with one or both children whilst the fathers made only a rare appearance due to work or other commitments.

## Roles and process

Words that immediately spring to mind when reflecting on the roles adopted by myself and the participants in the research process are *rapport* and *confidence*. They capture and characterize the progressive development of our respective roles for, as our rapport with each other strengthened, so did our confidence. Mine initially as that of the one who mainly asked the questions and theirs as those who predominantly answered them. As the *respondents*, the participants answered both pre-designed and ad lib questions that were directed at them. As a deliberate attempt had been made to inform them only of the overarching aim of the project and because the pre-established questions were not shared with the participants prior to the actual day of the interviews, the reported data were taken to be spontaneous and yet in need of expansion and validation.

Interviews I feel, especially when semi-structured in nature, can be free-flowing conversations where all participants feel at ease to ask, ask again, answer and reflect in silence. In hindsight, neither my participants nor I had the confidence to embrace this flexibility initially for we were constrained by lack of experience and the mere knowledge that we were part of an actual research!

Referring to the study of intra-family discourse, Mayor (2004: 2) concedes that as an inherently private domain, family life is traditionally a difficult area to explore. Once access is gained, the researcher's very presence will 'cause ripples on the surface of smooth routinized processes' (Blommaert and Jie 2010: 26), and thereby affect the family dynamics. Consequently, in addition to my physical presence, the digital recorder capturing every sigh, pause and verbal utterance placed additional pressure on the participants, no doubt, and may have impacted on the interactions which were close yet not entirely akin to natural conversations. Time however, was on our side – and over the weeks, months and years that ensued since the first interview, our initial fears were outweighed by a growing interest, from both parties, in the themes and areas for further enquiry which emerged in the discussions (Mason 2004) and the other pools of data. Moving on to this phase signalled that we had, together, reached a key milestone in the research process where we had become co-creators of meaning and knowledge. Another indicator that the interviews had in fact become near-naturalistic conversations were the digressions that became much more apparent and frequent over time: these ranged from unexpected visitors arriving at the door to children being cajoled by their parents into performing dance routines they had rehearsed to the latest Box office Bollywood song in my presence.

And so, I too became a *participant* within the research context where my role expanded beyond that of a mere interviewer. I played with the children, watched television, exchanged recipes with the mothers and even answered questions they had for me about my background. The following excerpt indexes this very feature of interviewing which is that it is a give-and-take process. In the opening line, as the researcher I am directing a question at Janak, the father in family A and referring to his parents both of whom were on a visit to England at the time. As I do not speak Malayalam and as the grandparents did not speak English, Janak had stepped in to translate for his parents and the conversation digresses as follows:

Indu: Since your parents are here, I have a few questions for them. Would you be able to translate for them please?

Janak: Yeah, yeah.

Indu: Thank you. So, what is your parents' first language?

Janak: Malayalam. You from Sri Lanka?

Indu: Yes

Janak: Which part?

Indu: Kandy, which is the hill capital of Sri Lanka.

Janak: Kandy. I never heard. And what language do you speak?

Indu: Sinhalese.

Janak: Ah, not Tamil?

Indu: No sadly, I never learnt it. So, do your parents speak Tamil or any other languages apart from Malayalam?

And thus the focus of the conversation shifted from them to me until I steered the focus back to my research, as seen in the last two lines of this excerpt. I recognised early on in the research that appreciating the participants' interest in me and my background was as important for this 'getting-to-know' stage and only strengthened the rapport between us. What this also essentially demonstrated was that it is not always possible to neatly class ethnographic interviews as mere 'professional conversations' (Kvale 2007: 7).

### **From pre-designed to ad lib: questions and questioning**

It was questions that always necessitated the scheduling of interviews with the participants: questions that arose when reading, writing, reflecting and even when watching television, while thinking, naively, that I was having a day off research! These pre-scripted questions, some of which I share next, allowed me to build a narrative around my participants in a much more in-depth manner.

The pre-designed questions in the preliminary round of interviews yielded: a) participant profile information (questions 1 and 2), b) perceptions of domain-specific (question 3), participant-specific (question 4) and situation-specific language use (question 5), c) attitudes towards heritage language maintenance and d) self-perceived notions on language proficiency. A select few from the questions that generated this data are the following, which are adapted from Baker and Sanderson (2000: 88):

1. For how long have you lived in the UK?
2. Why did you and your family move to the UK?
3. What language(s) did you use on a daily basis before moving to the UK?
4. In what language(s) do you speak to your relatives?
5. In what language (s) do you argue with your sister/brother?

In these two-generational families, such questions were mainly answered by one or both parents whilst the children interjected at irregular intervals to either assent to or disagree with what was being reported by their parents. Proving 'open-endedness' to be the essence of ethnographic interviews (Saville-Troike 2003: 100), the questions prompted narratives which evoked memories of lived experiences in the participants. For instance, Chitra, the mother of family B answers question 3 (above) by referring to the period she spent in the Middle East prior to moving to the UK and talks of the multilingual workforce she found herself to be a part of:

Chitra: Before I came here, I was working in Saudi. So, there is only medium Arabic and English...Not like here, but used to have English. All writing is in English.

The participants' answers, like that of Chitra offered a whole host of information that was not entirely restricted to answering *what* language was used *where*. They offered me cues on competence and attitudes to languages and created opportunities for impromptu questions. Furthermore, drawing on this data, I was able to define the participants' language practices within different geographical contexts as well as within various domains from the home to the work place, which proved to be significant in the analysis process.

A principal objective behind the use of interviews was to investigate how and why the participants' language practices as well as social factors like age and gender can create contestations of status and power. Despite being South Asian like my participants, I was very much an *outsider* to the cultural appropriateness of enquiring into family life and structure from the participant group. Furthermore, time and time again, my desire to ask questions was overpowered by a disinclination to admit to *not knowing*: something that most of us are prone to as we enter adulthood. However, having established a strong rapport with the families and having gradually developed in confidence, I was able to use the follow-up interviews to discuss topics around male-dominant households with the women. This line of questioning allowed me to understand their relationships with their spouses and in-laws back in India, and within their present context of residence in the UK. In order to enter into such discussions I chose the topic of household chores which is typically considered to be a woman-dominant domain and used the following questions:

At home in the UK who is responsible for the household chores? Was this different when you were in India? If so, how?

It cannot be denied that gender played a significant role in the responses I received in such follow-up interviews. As noted beforehand, whilst the wives were always present for the interviews, the husbands were most often at work. After months of acquaintance, the women, I felt, had begun to see me as yet another female friend, a confidante, that they felt they could talk to, recounting the challenges and joys of a life they had left behind and the life they found themselves in, in the UK. Guided by my questions on language practices and status and power

relations, their reflective accounts centred, for the most part, around their experiences of family life, aspirations for children and language use all of which contributed to the focus of my research.

Taking its natural course in semi-structured interviews, the responses to these pre-designed questions led to the inclusion of new questions and queries as the interviews progressed. The semi-structured interviews provided the flexibility that was necessary to adapt the questions according to the different participants. As previously mentioned, my participants were of two generations and possessed varying levels of proficiency in English, the medium in which the interviews were carried out. Therefore, the questions were modified, rephrased and adjusted in a way that did not hinder the natural flow of the interview process. Unlike with the interactional data, which I had to listen to without a visual record, the interviews were conducted by me in person. Therefore, the way in which I formulated the questions and addressed them to the participants, the gaps in between questions, the digressions and interruptions, all varied from participant to participant. The interviews allowed me to observe the participants' gestures, facial expressions and interjections, and to develop a keen sense of awareness and respect for pauses, and hesitations, all of which added meaning to what was being asked, or to that which was being said by the participants. This allowed me to modify lines of enquiry and to respond to the interviewees' behaviour.

### ***Following up for analysis.***

A quick reference to the interactional data obtained from the audio-recorded family conversations will be made at this point to offer a clearer picture on how they fed into the follow-up interviews in the data analysis process. Using digital recorders provided by me, the families had captured approximately seventy hours of conversations they had carried out in their homes. As the audio-recordings were vital in identifying *how* the participants were using language in intra-family discourse, the bilingual conversations were transcribed and translated as an initial and mandatory step in the process of analysis. The transcriptions were completed by two members from the Malayalam speaking community. As a non-Malayalam speaker, I was unable to check the accuracy of the transcriptions. However, playing back relevant recordings at the follow-up interviews meant that, to my relief and delight, the participants were able to vouch for the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Reading the transcripts of the interactional data, I identified conversational segments where it seemed that the status or authority of the participants were being challenged, and sought further clarification from the family members in question at the follow-up interviews. With their help, I was also able to better understand episodes of disagreement between family members as they were caught in the recordings: the absence of visuals would have made this a next to impossible task if it had not been for the participants' input. This analysis process that entailed cross-checking my interpretations of the family conversations against the interview responses will be discussed further in the ensuing paragraphs.



### **Clarification**

On reflection, I would say that careful consideration of conversational data results from the reading and re-reading of transcripts and listening and re-listening to the actual recordings themselves. To reiterate, this painstaking process only led to further interviews because of which they became the one data collection instrument that was used across the entire four years of my research. I will therefore explain next how the interviews offered clarification and enhanced the validity of both the primary and secondary data obtained over the course of the research.

As stated before, the focus of my research rested around families' status and power relations and language practices. The transcripts of the interactional data appeared to suggest from the very start that the mothers wished to continue with a patrilineal system within their nuclear families and that it was acknowledged by the children. For instance, the following conversation between Vineeta and her daughter Anju from family C, I felt, reflected the children's acceptance of their father as the key decision-maker in the family. The English utterances in this selection and the ones to follow, are in the regular font and **Bold** is used for the translated utterances from Malayalam to English.

- Anju:       **Shall we take Anand brother too? He can change his books as well.**  
Vineeta:   **Yeah we will take him.**  
Anju:       **We will go as soon as Papa wakes up. I will beg Papa to take us.**  
Vineeta:   **You will do what?**  
Anju:       **I will beg Papa to him.** Ha ha Well I don't need to because Dad  
              will let me go if you ask as well.

I noted with interest that even though Vineeta had already given her consent to Anju's request to go to the library with her brother, the daughter's words show that it is the permission of her father which ultimately matters. Wanting to know more, the following conversation took place between Vineeta and I at a follow-up interview:

- Indu:       When Anju wants to go to the library, she says to you that she will *beg* papa to take her – why do you think she uses the word *beg*?  
Vineeta:   That is the Indian system. Without asking permission from papa, we can't do anything. That's our culture, ask the Head. If Anand (*son – insertion my own*) wants to go to a friend's place, I say 'ask the dad. He's the superior. He's the decision-maker'.

And thus Vineeta's response helped with substantiating and expanding on the assumption that the patriarchal system that the first-generation participants had grown up knowing and valuing back in India was being endorsed in their own homes in a diasporic setting. So in essence, what I saw in practice in the interactional data – the practice of considering the father as the chief authority

figure in the household – I was able to rationalise from the emic point-of-view as a result of the follow-up interviews.

### ***Not just on paper: secondary data in practice***

As previously mentioned, the interviews also helped support relevant secondary data noted in the readings I carried out at the time on and about the Malayalis in diasporic settings. Such literature on the Malayalis unfailingly mentioned three things. Firstly, the remarkable 100% literacy rate in Kerala and secondly, that in education, Malayali women are the most literate in the entire country (Eapon and Kodoth 2003). And that's not all, for we are told that the Malayalis are known to be the main 'export' of Kerala, a trend resulting from the women in the region migrating overseas to take up employment as nursing staff. Corroborating this secondary data, were the interview responses such as the following by Deepa, the mother of family A:

Deepa: All the house wives in India are graduates. If I go back to India I'll be illiterate because I did a diploma. If I had a plan I would have done a degree. But I wanted a job, so that's why I diverted from studies.

Like Deepa, the mothers in all the participant families were nurses at the local National Health Service and had professional qualifications and experience to work and live in the UK. However, Deepa's response in this excerpt evinced that, to them, a nursing diploma was nothing in comparison to the academic credentials of the average Keralite woman.

### **Thematic expansion**

Complementing pertinent literature, the content of the interactional data held clues to the Malayalis' way of life in England and the roles and responsibilities they appeared to hold post-migration. It was noted earlier that the Malayali families seemed to conform to a male-dominant family system and to consider the fathers as the chief authority figures in their respective families. To expand on this postulation, I began to consider the roles and responsibilities held by them and their spouses which is when I came across Percot's (2012) research on immigrant Malayali families in Ireland, the findings of which proved highly applicable to my research.

Percot (2012) writes that migration had led to a discernible role-reversal between the Malayali husbands and wives within her participant group. As the mothers in my research seemed to hold a higher socio-economic status to that of their partners, my data appeared to echo Percot's observations. For example, in the next extract, in family A, the mother Deepa is approached by daughter Kavita about a parent's evening at her School:

- Deepa: **What time do you have to go to All Saints on June 6th? Is it at 6 or 6:30?**
- Kavita: **We will go at 6.**
- Deepa: **Look at the paper because I have night duty that day.**  
07:30 I have to return.
- Kavita: Right...7 pm Mum.
- Deepa: Is it 7 pm?

In this episode Deepa asks Kavita to confirm the time of the parent's evening. The mother has a night shift at the hospital on the same day and is keen to ensure that she can attend the meeting at her daughter's school prior to going back to work. By this stage, I had begun to see links between the parents' English language proficiency and the roles and responsibilities they held within and outside of their homes. Keen to present this as a characterising feature or theme of these families, I met with the mothers and asked them to present their self-perceived notions of their own and their spouses' competence in English. When the women unanimously reported that they were far more fluent and competent in English than their husbands, I introduced the topic of responsibilities to the discussion:

- Indu: If you think you are stronger in English, do you think you have more roles, or roles that you would not normally have had in India, now that you are in the UK?
- Vineeta: Yes, I have more responsibilities. Since we came to England, there was a lot of applications for citizenship-so I am the one who took responsibility for doing that... Parent's evenings, he also goes with me, because he wants to know the progress. When making phone calls, he finds it difficult to understand the accent.

Vineeta, the mother from family C cites three activities here from completing the citizenship applications to answering the phone, to emphasise the lead role she took or takes in official matters. She does not hesitate to imply concurrently that her husband is as keen to fulfil his parental duties. The women from the other families only echoed Vineeta's response citing similar examples. I was thus able to expand on the theme that host language competence was a determiner of the new found socio-economic status of the Malayali women.

### ***Answering the Why***

Researching the language practices of the participants necessitated addressing the *why* question. To present their rationale for the languages they chose to use within the family networks, I needed to consider the participants' language ideologies or their perceptions of language including their notions on what language can or can't do (Wei and Hua 2010: 161). The families, as noted beforehand, all admitted to the importance of English. They were equally or perhaps, even more committed towards maintaining and actively teaching the

Malayalam language to the children both at home and community level. Therefore, using interviews which are a means of understanding the 'experiences, feelings and hopes' (Kvale 2007: 1) of the interviewee and key to 'making sense of' (Rapley 2004: 14) their lives, I encouraged the Malayalis to discuss this topic:

- Indu: Do you have British citizenship? If so, how has this affected your motivation to teach Malayalam to your children?
- Chitra: Got it two years ago. I am still proud to be Indian, but I like to live here for the betterment of my children. There's a different style of education here. In India it's theory based education, but here's it's practical education. Here, we are a bit anxious about the culture. But where ever we go we want to continue with our culture, values, relations, faith, and language.

Chitra's answer was a reiteration of the responses of the other parents all of whom claimed that it was the education system that had attracted them to England. It was also suggested in their explanations that despite being permanent residents in the UK, their one wish was to make stronger, their link with the heritage culture and to continue to celebrate their *Indianness*. In this manner, the enthusiasm of the Malayalis towards retaining the Malayalam language and transferring it to the younger generation was explained: it was the gateway to maintaining heritage cultural values, the religion and their ties with relatives in India. And thus, the interview data contributed to addressing the *why* question.

### ***Unravelling the unsaid***

One way in which I studied status and power relations was by considering *who* listened to *whom* and whose instructions were effective and whose weren't in parent-child interactions. The intra-family conversations offered me many such episodes where the children were noted to challenge the status and/or power of one or both parents. In the following excerpt from family B, five year old Ajith is being cajoled into opening his mouth as the parents Ashok and Chitra are concerned that their younger child may have tonsillitis:

- Ashok: Let me see how your tonsillitis is. Let me see your throat.  
Come here where there is light.
- Ajith: No, no
- Ashok: Come here, let your mother see.
- Chitra: I cannot see from there. Come here.
- Ashok: Your mother knows, she is the nurse. Open your mouth wide open.
- Chitra: Say aaah
- Ajith: Aaah
- Chitra: Put your tongue out
- Ajith: Aaah

Ajith obeys his father's instructions only when he is told that he will be checked by his mother, the nurse. Not entirely content with the possibility that Ajith's willingness to approach the mother was prompted by her profession, I encouraged Chitra to comment on this incident:

Indu: Ashok asks Ajith to open his mouth to check his tonsillitis, and Ajith says no. But when Ashok asks Ajith to show it to you, he comes-Ashok also says that you are a nurse. How would you explain this?

Chitra: Children think I'm strict, but Ashok is very soft with them all the time.

Chitra's response immediately supported my postulation that whilst the fathers in all the families seemed to hold a symbolic power, it was exercised in actuality by the mothers. Whilst Chitra's profession may undoubtedly have encouraged the child to place his trust on her, it was more her approach to upbringing and disciplining the children, that resulted in the desired outcome in this episode. This was one of the many occasions where neither my field notes nor the other pools of data held the explanations for the *unsaid*- as the researcher, I was not always privy to *insider* knowledge, which in this excerpt the child Ajith has. His compliance to the instructions being given arises from his awareness of the father's soft approach as opposed to the mother's sterner methods. What is more, on careful consideration, it struck me that the father Ashok too knows his children to be more submissive to their mother's authority. This was something I was made aware of thanks to the follow-up interviews.

The interviews, thus, lasted throughout the four years of my research becoming an indispensable tool in the data analysis process. However, scheduling the follow-up interviews ad hoc came with the inevitable challenges. Soon after the data collection began, one of the participant families started making arrangements to relocate to a new house. Another family purchased a house, which was followed by its renovation making it impossible for them to make themselves available for the interviews. Soon afterwards, the same family had to make an unexpected visit to India due to the illness of a family member. As a researcher working 'in a real social environment and with real people' (Blommaert and Jie's 2010: p.22), I had read on and experienced first-hand that such trials within fieldwork were unpreventable.

## Conclusion

The ground that I attempted to cover in this chapter was primarily based on the design and implementation of interviews within my ethnographic research into family language practices. Interviewing, as I claim in the discussion, is heralded by a need for clarification, thematic expansion, context-building and enhancing the validity of the findings. In the case of my research, the interactional data played a crucial role in this process, giving rise to assumptions and questions and thereby giving reason for not one but a series of follow-up interviews. These interviews

enabled me and the participants the opportunity to build a narrative, to fill in gaps and to explore and explain the *Hows* and the *Whys*.

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